

Karl Arezzini: An Autism Success Story that May be Cut Short

By Lynn and David Arezzini

Parents of Karl Arezzini

Our son Karl is a gifted 24-year-old cellist and singer who has autism. Some of Karl's musical accomplishments include performing twice at Carnegie Hall, singing for CT state legislators, being featured in the Tribeca Film Festival's award winning film, "Lost and Found Childhood" and being the subject of numerous articles in local and national publications. The irony of Karl's life is that he can play Bach suites on the cello but has had enormous difficulty brushing his teeth, dressing himself, crossing the street and living an independent life. However, with the help of programs like ABILIS of Stamford/Greenwich CT and Chapel Haven in New Haven CT, Karl is closing the gap between his great music abilities and his daily living and independence skills. In spite of all Karl's amazing progress, he may have to leave Chapel Haven in June 2015 and return home due to lack of state residential funding.

Bringing adults with disabilities home after they have been successfully living in the community is not only cruel, it is a huge waste of the investments that the public schools, DDS (Department of Developmental Disabilities) and families have made in these individuals over the years. Why have 15 years of public special education, and transition training if a disabled adult's future is to live home with elderly parents? This is morally wrong and a huge waste of taxpayer dollars!

This is a fight for disabled adults' civil rights. No other group has ever been told that they must live with their parents until their parents die. Our adult children need laws to protect their rights to live in the community with the supports they need to be as independent and productive as possible.

Wouldn't it be better for our 24-year-old son to be living independently now so that he doesn't become an expensive burden to society as an emergency placement? Wouldn't it be a better use of funding to allow Karl to become more independent and productive, rather than let his independent skills

regress until the traumatic day when he becomes an emergency placement following our deaths? Karl's needs are immediate and can not wait until we die. He needs residential supports now! Do not cut his funding but, rather, increase it.

I drove to Hartford with my son for all the Governor's work sessions to discuss ways to eliminate the waiting list for residential funding. Karl even sang about his wish for an independent life at a September meeting. Taking out millions of dollars from the DDS budget is a strange way to help disabled adults. Especially when there was a \$30 million and a \$5.5 million cut to DDS in the past 3 years.

My husband and I plead with you to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Please be the governor and the legislators who care about people who cannot defend themselves and leave a legacy of hope for their future.

Sincerely,

Lynn and David Arezzini

Karl and Lynn Arezzini performing in Lynn's Cos Cob home:



Our son Karl is a gifted 24-year-old cellist and singer who has autism. With the help of programs like ABILIS of Stamford/Greenwich CT and Chapel Haven in New Haven CT, Karl is closing the gap between his great music abilities and his daily living and independence skills. In spite of Karl's amazing progress, he may have to leave Chapel Haven in June 2015 and return home due to lack of state residential funding.

Bringing adults with disabilities home after they have been successfully living in the community is not only cruel, it is a huge waste of the investments that the public schools, DDS and families have made in these individuals over the years. Why have 15 years of public special education, and transition training if a disabled adult's future is to live home with elderly parents? This is morally wrong and a huge waste of taxpayer dollars!

Wouldn't it be better for our son to be living independently now so that he doesn't become an expensive burden to society as an emergency placement? Wouldn't it be a better use of funding to allow Karl to become more independent and productive, rather than let his independent skills regress until the traumatic day when he becomes an emergency placement following our deaths? Karl's needs are immediate and can not wait until we die. Do not cut his funding but, rather, increase it!

I attended all the Governor's work sessions about eliminating the waiting list for residential funding. Karl even sang about his wish for an independent life at a September meeting. Taking out over \$8 million is a strange way to help disabled adults, especially when there was a \$30 million and a \$5.5 million cut to DDS in the past 3 years.

My husband and I plead with you to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Please be the governor who cares about people who cannot defend themselves and leave a legacy of hope for their future.